SUBJECTS of RELIGION,

ILLUSTRATED IN

EXTRACTS FROM THE SERMONS

OF

THE LATE DOCTOR JORTIN:

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

OCCASIONAL PRAYERS.

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SUBJECTS ILLUSTRATED.

		PAGE
1.	*Religion Natural and Revealed* - - - - -	1
2.	*The Omnipreſence and Omniſcience of God* -	5
3.	*The Goodneſs of God in the Work of Redemption*	9
4.	*The Spiritual Worſhip of God* - - - - -	12
5.	*The Dignity and Divinity of Chriſt* - - - -	16
6.	*Chriſt to be Adored* - - - - - - - - -	19
7.	*Obſervance of the Sabbath* - - - - - -	20
8.	*The Deſigns of God Manifeſted in the Goſpel* -	26
9.	*Moral Duties taught, and the Practice of them encouraged by the Chriſtian Revelation* - -	30
10.	*Againſt contracting Evil Habits* - - - - -	35
11.	*Temperance to be obſerved. The Soul and Body to be exerciſed in uſeful Employment* - - -	39
12.	*The Value of Mental Accompliſhments and External Poſſeſſions depends on the Application of them to proper Uſes* - - - - - - -	42
13.	*Induſtry in Buſineſs* - - - - - - - - -	44
14.	*Induſtry in Religion* - - - - - - - - -	49
15.	*The Duty and Advantages of Early Piety* -	54
16.	*The Pleaſures enjoyed by a Religious Perſon* -	65
	OCCASIONAL PRAYERS - - - - - -	68

ILLUSTRATED.

PAGE.

1 - - -

Religion Natural and Revealed.

Religion divides itſelf into Natural and Revealed. Natural Religion ſuppoſeth a God, a Providence, and a Future State: There are many proofs of the being of God; but thoſe which the Scriptures mention, and which are beſt adapted to all capacities, are the works of God, the greatneſs, diſtance, order, motion, regularity, and beauty of all the parts of the world; which could neither make themſelves, nor conſpire to one certain end, but muſt have been formed and muſt be guided by a Mind moſt wiſe and good and powerful. To this may be added the general conſent of Mankind in all ages to acknowledge a Deity; an Atheiſt excepted, who ſometimes ariſeth in the Moral World, as a Monſter is ſometimes brought forth in the Natural World.

From the being of God appears the certainty of a Future State; for ſince God is, and ſince he is juſt, good, wiſe, and happy, and yet here below juſtice, goodneſs, and wiſdom have not a due proportion of happineſs above folly and vice, this muſt be a ſtate of trial, which ſhall end in a ſtate of retribution.

Revealed Religion, or Chriſtianity, is alſo founded upon plain and ſtrong evidence, of which a Chriſtian, who would be wiſe in the religious ſenſe, ſhould not be ignorant. The proofs of Chriſtianity are the concurrent teſtimony of Chriſtians, ever ſince the Goſpel was firſt preached; the ſwift and ſucceſsful progreſs of it, which was foretold long before by the Prophets, and which could not have been brought to paſs without a divine aſſiſtance; a great variety of beneficial miracles performed in behalf of it; the holy lives and patient ſufferings of the firſt Chriſtians; the predictions of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, which have been accompliſhed; and the excellence of Chriſtian Morality, which is ſo uſeful and ſo amiable, that a Man who could in a good meaſure live up to it, and ſet it always before him for his rule, would probably, as far as he was obſerved and known, command the reſpect and eſteem even of a wicked world, much more of reaſonable

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and well-diſpoſed perſons. Such a Religion, in the main muſt be ſafe and true: for what harm can there be in doing good? what error in loving virtue? and what danger in reſembling God?

Revealed Religion divides itſelf into doctrine and precept; into belief and practice; into faith and works. Therefore religious wiſdom conſiſts, in a knowledge of the things which a Chriſtian ought to believe, and of the things which he ought to do.

That part of Revelation, which relates to doctrine or opinion is briefly ſummed up in the Creed called The Apoſtles Creed, a profeſſion of which, according to our Church, entitles a perſon to be baptized, and conſequently to be a Chriſtian. Indeed it becomes a Chriſtian not to reſt here, but to believe in general that whatſoever Chriſt and his Apoſtles have taught, is true, and according to his leiſure and abilities to make it the ſubject of his inquiries.

As to the practical part of the Goſpel, what we ought to do, and what to avoid, in the ſtation and circumſtances in which we are placed, this ought to employ the thoughts of a Chriſtian during the whole courſe of his life. It is not a difficult ſtudy; it is conſiſtent with lawful affairs and innocent amuſements. But it

ſhould never be forgotten and long neglected. We ſhould frequently aſk ourſelves, what we can do for the honour of God and the benefit of Mankind? what temptations we ought more particularly to ſhun, as moſt dangerous? what diſorderly affections we feel, which ſhould be ſubdued? and what good diſpoſitions we have, which may be ſtrengthened and improved?

VOL. 2.—SERM. 5.

THE

THE OMNIPRESENCE AND OMNISCIENCE OF GOD.

THE conſideration that God is preſent every where in knowledge and in power ſhould deter us from ſin. It is a ſublime deſcription which the Pſalmiſt gives us of God's preſence, knowledge, and power. "Whither ſhall I go from thy ſpirit? or whither ſhall "I flee from thy preſence? if I aſcend up into heaven, "thou art there: if I make my bed in the grave, be- "hold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morn- "ing, and dwell in the uttermoſt parts of the ſea, "even there ſhall thy hand lead me, and thy right "hand ſhall hold me. If I ſay, ſurely the darkneſs "ſhall cover me, even the night ſhall be light about "me. Yea the darkneſs hideth not from Thee, but "the night ſhineth as the day; the darkneſs and the "light to thee are both alike." An ancient philoſopher, who hath been generally and deſervedly eſteemed, hath fallen almoſt into the ſame thoughts and

words; which ſhews that exalted minds have a ſingular ſagacity in the diſcovering of truth. He obſerves that the wicked ſhall not go unpuniſhed, and adds; "Boaſt "not thyſelf, how fortunate ſoever thou mayſt be, that "thou ſhalt eſcape the divine Juſtice. Overlooked by "her thou canſt not be, no not though, ſmall as thou "art, thou ſhouldſt deſcend into the depths of the "earth, or though raiſed on high thou ſhouldſt fly up "into heaven."

Man, as he is a rational creature, is able if he makes a right uſe of his underſtanding, to diſcern his obligation to ſerve God, and to perceive that God requires of him only what is juſt and equitable. As he hath by nature affections of love and gratitude, when he duly conſiders what God hath done for him, he will be inclined to make him ſuitable returns; and as he hath ſtrong deſires of happineſs and immortality, when he reflects upon the rewards of righteouſneſs with any ſerious attention, he muſt wiſh that he may partake of them. One might therefore at firſt imagine that Man, who hath theſe abilities and inclinations, might be led to his duty by the gentler and nobler motives of perſuaſion, by the ſtill voice of reaſon, by love and gratitude, and by the honourable hopes of riſing again to

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a more excellent ſtate, and of approaching nearer to his Maker. But it is not ſo. In Man there is a mixture of the Angel and the brute, of good and bad, of dignity and meanneſs, of worthy reſolutions and of baſe diſpoſitions; and the very beſt of us at particular times, and under particular temptations ſtand in need of all kind of motives and helps to keep us from falling. The fear of puniſhment, though a leſs ingenuous, yet is often a neceſſary and an efficacious motive to amendment or to perſeverance in righteouſneſs.

We ought therefore frequently to call to mind thoſe very plain and obvious, but very aweful and terrible truths, "Am I a God at hand," ſaith the Lord, and not "a God afar off? Can any hide himſelf in ſecret places, "that I ſhall not ſee him?" God is every where preſent in knowledge; to his view lie expoſed all our follies and iniquities, thoſe which we miſrepreſent and falſely call weakneſſes and natural infirmities; thoſe which we have forgotten; thoſe of which we are aſhamed, which we would conceal from the world, and if it were poſſible, from ourſelves. God is every where preſent in power. If we offend him, he is able to puniſh us, and that puniſhment ſhall begin as ſoon, and laſt as long, and lie as heavy as he ſhall determine and appoint.

We cannot avoid him; we live and move in him; he is preſent within us and without us, and there is no way to eſcape him but by flying to him. He can make all the objects with which we are ſurrounded conſpire to diſquiet and afflict us; he can make us our own tormentors, he can let looſe upon us innumerable evils which we have never yet felt, and of which we have no notion. What a reſtraint ought this to lay upon us? and how careful ſhould it make us not to incur his diſpleaſure? Theſe are truths with which we are all perfectly well acquainted, and which for that reaſon ought to be frequently recommended to our conſideration; for ſo it is, that the things which are moſt familiar to us often eſcape our notice, and are leaſt regarded by us.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD IN THE WORK OF REDEMPTION.

SINCE all men by wilful tranſgreſſion depart, more or leſs, from their duty, and have cauſe to fear the conſequence of it, God by an act of mere goodneſs, as it is diſtinguiſhed from juſtice, hath ſuch compaſſion on us, and ſo loves us, that he hath given us his only-begotten Son, to take our nature upon him, to deliver us from ſin and miſery, to inſtruct us in our duty, and to open to us the way to eternal life.

Our Lord, in whom the goodneſs of God was manifeſted, came from heaven freely to offer us the moſt important knowledge of God, of our own ſouls, and of our future condition; to deliver us from a ſtate of doubt and fear; and to convince us of the truth of his doctrines and of the certainty of his promiſes by fulfilling the prophecies concerning himſelf, by foretelling future events, and by working miracles.

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As a Lawgiver, he came to teach us our duty, and to deliver to us in a plain manner pure and reaſonable precepts, the obſervance of which ſhould be rewarded with a happineſs ſurpaſſing all that we can hope and conceive.

As an example to incite us to the practice of virtue, he came to fulfil the laws of God by a perfect obedience, and by an entire reſignation to the divine will under the greateſt trials.

As a Redeemer, he came to reconcile us to God, by ſuffering in our ſtead, and by ſubmitting himſelf to afflictions and death for our ſake.

As a Mediator, he aſcended into heaven, there to intercede for us, to obtain for us the remiſſion of our ſins, and the favor of God upon our repentance, and to give us the aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit.

When we duly conſider the dignity of our Saviour, and his condeſcenſion and ſufferings, we cannot think that He could ſubmit to all this, unleſs to produce ſome benefit unſpeakably great; and we may juſtly ſuppoſe the advantages ariſing from it to be more extenſive and more excellent than it hath perhaps been uſually imagined. It is ſaid in the New Teſtament, that the righteous at the reſurrection ſhall be like to or equal to

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the Angels, and that Chriſt ſhall change their bodies even unto the likeneſs of his own. Men therefore receive more from the ſecond Adam than they loſt by the firſt: and Chriſt hath advanced human nature, by taking it upon him, to a greater glory and dignity than it had before. Thus is the divine Goodneſs manifeſted in its effects.

THE

The Spiritual Worship of God.

To worſhip God in ſpirit and in truth is in general to pay him a rational ſervice, a ſervice ſuitable both to his nature and to our own; which if we would perform we muſt obſerve the following directions:

Firſt, we muſt aſcribe to him all perfections; and this we may be enabled to do by conſidering our powers and our weakneſſes, our good qualities and our defects, and aſcribing to God in the moſt eminent degree what is excellent in our nature, and the perfections which are oppoſite and contrary to our defects. Thus, we find in ourſelves a certain degree of underſtanding, liberty, power, and goodneſs. If then we aſcribe theſe in a ſupreme degree to God, we ſhall conſider him as perfectly wiſe, knowing all things, incapable of being deceived, almighty, and able to perform whatſoever he pleaſeth, ruling over the world, and governing all things with juſtice and equity, with clemency and mercy.

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If we would worſhip God in a ſpiritual manner, we muſt take care to entertain juſt notions of religion. The principal parts of religion and the ends for which we are made and deſigned were theſe:

Firſt, to love and reverence God above all things, and to ſhew it by thoſe actions and that behaviour which gratitude and veneration and reliance naturally ſuggeſt.

Secondly, to love our neighbour as ourſelves, and to do to others as we would they ſhould do to us.

Thirdly, to amend what we can diſcover to be faulty and deficient in ourſelves, and to cultivate and improve our underſtanding.

We muſt remember that morality, though it be the principal part, is not the whole of religion. Our Lord came to be our Inſtructor, our Redeemer, and Mediator. A diligent endeavour therefore to learn what he requires us to believe and to do, and a reliance upon him as upon a Guide, and a Saviour, and an Interceſſor, and an obſervance of his ordinances, is as much our duty as ſobriety, or charity, or any other moral virtue.

If we would worſhip God in ſpirit and in truth, we muſt be attentive when we addreſs ourſelves to him, and appear in his preſence.

This is a duty in which we are often deficient; and our defects of this kind proceed from coldneſs and indifference to things ſacred and ſerious, and from too great a fondneſs for the world, and for ſenſible objects. Hence it comes to paſs, that though we know that we ought at certain times to worſhip God, and though we obſerve thoſe times, and meet together for that purpoſe, we ſuffer our thoughts to ſtray, and our imaginations to wander through the amuſements and the diverſions and the affairs of this life. Thus we change the ſpiritual worſhip of God into a ceremonial worſhip, or into ſomething that deſerveth not even that name, into ſomething lower and meaner than any part of that ceremonial worſhip which the Goſpel hath aboliſhed as uſeleſs and imperfect.

This is not to worſhip God in ſpirit and in truth; it is rather not to worſhip him at all in any ſenſe; it is to have no notion of his Supreme Majeſty and authority, and of our own wants, weakneſs, and dependence, one ſerious thought of which might be ſufficient to diſpel all other thoughts, and to make us as attentive and as much in earneſt as when we endeavour to make ourſelves acceptable to men, and to acquire ſome little advantage in our temporal affairs.

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The public worſhip of God is without queſtion a neceſſary and important duty; but private worſhip hath in ſome reſpects the advantage over it; and that intercourſe betweeen God and the ſoul which is quite concealed from the ſight and knowledge of others, is often the ſincereſt and the trueſt act of reverence and faith which we pay to him.

THE

THE DIGNITY AND DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

PROPHETS have ſhewed ſigns and wonders; they have even raiſed the dead; Apoſtles have done the ſame: but none of them ever ſaid of himſelf, "I "am the Reſurrection and the Life." They could not ſay it: for the power of raiſing the dead reſided not in them. They were not the cauſe of the miracles which they wrought: they were only the inſtruments, or rather the occaſion of them, ſince God performed them to juſtify the miſſion of his ſervants, and to confirm their doctrines. But the Son of God acts by a power of his own, becauſe ſuch inherent and permanent power is given to Him and to Him alone by his Father. "All things," ſays he, "that the Father hath, are "mine, and All power is given unto me." Thus is he diſtinguiſhed above all, who are called ſervants of God, and Sons of God.

The

The great work of Creation is aſcribed primarily to the Father, quite through the Scriptures; and in our baptiſmal Creed we profeſs to believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. But this Creation is alſo aſcribed, in a ſecondary manner to Jeſus Chriſt, who is called the Son of God, and the Word of God, who was appointed by the Father to this office and work of creation. For St. John thus prefaces his Goſpel: "In the beginning was the "Word, and the Word was with God," that is, with the Father, "and the Word was God," that is, was a Divine Perſon. "All things were made by Him. "And the Word was made fleſh and dwelt among us, "and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-be-"gotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

St. Paul ſpeaks in the ſame manner. "God," ſays he, "made all things by Jeſus Chriſt. He is the "Image of the inviſible God, the firſt-born of every "creature," or born before every creature. "For by "Him were all things created,—all things were cre-"ated by him, and for him; and he is before all things, "and by him all things conſiſt. For it pleaſed the "Father that in him ſhould all fulneſs dwell," all fulneſs of power and authority.

As therefore the Son received power from the Father to create the world at firſt, ſo did he receive power to be the Author of the Second Creation or Renovation of the world, and is appointed at the conſummation of all things, to raiſe and to judge mankind, and to receive his own Servants into everlaſting manſions. In this eminent ſenſe Chriſt is, as he ſays of himſelf, the Reſurrection and the Life.

VOL. 6.—SERM. 10.

CHRIST

CHRIST TO BE ADORED.

GOD alone is to be worſhipped and ſerved, in oppoſition to all falſe Gods; but He himſelf hath made the exception, with relation to his own Son, who is in the Father and the Father in him; and the exception is expreſſed in the New Teſtament, and in theſe words:

"Jeſus ſaid unto his diſciples," after his reſurrection, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. "And he bleſſed them, and he was parted from them, "and carried up into heaven: and they worſhipped "him.

"God hath highly exalted him, and given him a "name which is above every name, that at the name "of Jeſus every knee ſhould bow, of things in heaven, "and things on earth, and things under the earth: "and that every tongue ſhould confeſs that Jeſus Chriſt "is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

VOL. 5.—SERM. I.

OBSERVANCE OF THE SABBATH.

THE Chriſtians, met together every Sunday; at which time portions of Scripture from the Old and New Teſtament were read, and diſcourſes were made, to exhort them to piety; then they joined in prayer; then they partook of the holy Communion; and laſtly, they made collections for the poor.

The firſt Chriſtians were ſo perſuaded that this was an indiſpenſable duty, that they obſerved it, not only in peaceable times, when they were permitted to make open profeſſion of their faith, but in times of perſecution, and at the hazard of their lives. The cruelty of Princes and Magiſtrates could not make them neglect it; for we find by their writings that they uſed to come together before break of day, and in ſmall companies, and in different places, when they could not meet openly and in great numbers.

Thus was the Lord's-day kept by the firſt Believers, whoſe example in this, as in ſome other things is worthy of our reſpect and imitation.

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That they who have given themſelves up to vice and profaneneſs ſhould ſhun the aſſemblies of Chriſtians, is no wonder. Their behaviour in this, bad as it is, at leaſt is conſiſtent with the reſt of their actions; and it is natural, for thoſe who hate their duty, to avoid the places of public worſhip where they muſt hear diſagreeable truths. But they who retain ſome regard to virtue and religion, and yet take little or no notice of a day ſet apart for their improvement in virtue and religion, are without excuſe. If they will be judged by the practice of God's people under the Law, or of the Apoſtles and firſt Chriſtians, they muſt ſtand condemned; or if they had rather appeal to the dictates of Reaſon, there alſo they will find nothing to favour them.

For if it be true that God ſent his Son to give us laws, by which we ſhould regulate our lives, and by which we ſhould be judged, it is equally true that we ought not to omit any opportunities of frequenting thoſe aſſemblies where the divine precepts are taught by thoſe who are appointed to that office, that ſo we may be inſtructed in thoſe things on which our eternal happineſs depends. This argument will reach the greater part of Chriſtians, who ſtand in need of ſuch

inſtruction, that they may acquire right notions of Morality and of Chriſtianity, and a due ſenſe of their importance. Our duty is indeed eaſy to be known; ſo far eaſy, that it requires neither much learning, nor hard ſtudy, nor great abilities. A tolerable underſtanding, and an honeſt mind will ſuffice to attain all neceſſary knowledge: but ſome diligence and application is needful, and an uſe of the means which are afforded to us: we muſt worſhip God in private and in public, and read the Scriptures, and hear them explained.

If it be true that we are weak and frail creatures, diſpoſed to be led by temptations, to be taken up with the things of this world, and to forget what relates to the next, ſometimes perſiſting in a behaviour which we cannot approve, and ſometimes treacherouſly deluding ourſelves, it is equally true that we want to be reminded of thoſe things from which we turn away our thoughts, to be excited to thoſe duties which we know better than we practiſe, and to be continually exhorted, leſt we be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin. Upon this account religious aſſemblies are abſolutely neceſſary; where are ſet before us the obligations to live righteouſly, and the advantages of

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ſuch a life, the pernicious nature and fatal conſequences of ſin, truths which the wiſeſt and the beſt perſon in the world wants frequently to hear, plain and obvious as they are; and truths which every perſon ought to hear with attention and reſpect, how imperfect ſoever be our diſcourſes upon them. Such is the dignity of the ſubject, that we muſt ſink beneath it; but ſuch is its uſefulneſs and importance, that it is ſcarcely poſſible to treat it ſeriouſly without ſaying ſomething that muſt have a good effect upon a well-diſpoſed mind.

If it be true that our meeting together at ſtated times for the ſolemn worſhip of God hath a plain tendency to make us live in the fear of God, to make us uſeful in our ſeveral ſtations, it follows that this is a duty to which we are bound, even for the ſake of others.

If one were ſo well ſkilled in his duty, that he could hear nothing concerning it which he did not know before, and ſo perfect in the practice of it, as to ſtand in need of no exhortation, ſtill it would be his duty to frequent theſe aſſemblies of Chriſtians, that he might ſet a good example to his brethren, and encourage religion to the utmoſt of his power.

If it be true, as Solomon obſerves, that righteouſneſs exalteth a nation, that virtue tends to make ſocieties flouriſhing and powerful, here alſo is another reaſon for public worſhip, drawn from the public intereſt.

Laſtly, There is no duty more frequently inculcated in the Goſpel than benevolence, brotherly love, and charity. Upon this our Lord inſiſts with a particular earneſtneſs; by this, he ſays it ſhould be known who are his diſciples; thereby diſowning all thoſe who will not comply with it. Now there is nothing which ſeems more proper to promote and preſerve union and friendſhip amongſt Chriſtians than the public worſhip of God. When we are aſſembled to appear before our Maker, nothing is wanted that is proper to inſpire great and good ſentiments, to exclude the frivolous cares and concerns of this life, and to raiſe the mind to heaven; all worldly diſtinctions ceaſe, and we come as fellow-ſervants of the ſame God; we praiſe him for the common benefits which we receive from him; we pray to him, not for ourſelves ſingly, but in general for all men, in particular for our brethren in the faith; we deſire him to receive us hereafter into that kingdom where dwell peace and concord; we hear thoſe divine precepts which we ought all to obey, and by which we

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muſt all be judged; and in partaking of the Lord's Supper, we eat and drink together at the ſame table, as being all of Chriſt's family, and belonging to the ſame Maſter, who loved us with an equal and impartial love, and offers us the ſame promiſes and the ſame privileges.

One end for which the Lord's Supper was inſtituted was to be to us a lively image of the union which ought to ſubſiſt among thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians, and which indeed ſubſiſts amongſt thoſe who are True Believers, as they are Children of the ſame Father, Servants of the ſame Lord, Members of the ſame Society, Heirs of the ſame inheritance, and parts of the ſame Body of which Chriſt is the Head.

THE DESIGNS OF GOD MANIFESTED IN THE GOSPEL.

THE laſt and great manifeſtation of the wiſdom of God is the Goſpel, that full and final Revelation of the will of God by Jeſus Chriſt; upon account of which, Chriſt is ſtyled the WISDOM of God, in whom are repoſited all the treaſures of Divine Wiſdom, and who was foretold and promiſed from the beginning of the world. When our firſt parent diſobeyed his Creator and fell into ſin, God did not totally caſt him off, but gave him intimations and hope of a reſtitution, and alſo beſtowed upon him length of days, that by repentance and renewed obedience he might qualify himſelf for a future and a happier ſtate.

The light of Nature, and the tradition of a divine Revelation in paradiſe, were ſufficient guides to the poſterity of Adam for ſome time. And afterwards the Patriarchs, and then the Jews were placed under God's particular government and protection, to be a perpetual teſtimony againſt atheiſm and idolatry, and to recommend true religion to all nations. The numerous rites and ceremonies of the Jewiſh diſpenſation were wiſely deſigned

ſigned to keep that people from going after falſe Gods worſhipped by the neighbouring Nations; and theſe rites were at the ſame time both repreſentations of moral purity, and figures of Chriſt, the Meſſias, who was foretold by the Prophets and by whoſe coming the wiſdom of God was moſt conſpicuouſly manifeſted, life and immortality were brought to light, and it appeared that all the various ſcenes of Providence, from firſt to laſt, ſhould at the final judgement terminate in a juſt retribution to every ſingle perſon according to his deſerts. Many and moſt important are the ends and deſigns of God, manifeſted in the Goſpel.

One was to unfold to us the doctrine of Redemption; to accompliſh which, it pleaſed God to ſend into the world his only Son, who condeſcending to take our nature upon him, became, what no man beſides him ever was or will be, one who never offended in thought, word, or deed, who performed the exacteſt obedience to the will of his Father, who ſubmitted to afflictions, indignities, and a cruel death, and thus became qualified to exerciſe the ſublime and merciful office of a Redeemer, and a Mediator between God and Man. For all mankind, without exception, he procured a releaſe from death by a reſurrection. But this reſurrection

rection was to be beneficial or detrimental to them, according to their paſt conduct, and to the uſe which they had made of the ſtate in which they had been placed, and of the degrees of knowledge and ability that had been imparted to them. To his faithful ſervants he promiſed a diſtinguiſhed place in that part of his Father's numerous manſions, which is called, The Kingdom of heaven, that where he is there they ſhould be alſo. That men cannot otherwiſe become happy than by the practice of virtue, and that ſinners cannot become capable of pardon without forſaking their iniquities, is evident both from Reaſon, and from all former Revelations of the divine will. But by the Goſpel the wiſdom of God hath in a more illuſtrious manner, and with a greater weight of arguments, ſet forth the indiſpenſable neceſſity of repentance and amendment and the impoſſibility of obtaining pardon without it. In this very Revelation of mercy and love, we are commanded not to truſt to faith without works, but to walk worthy of our vocation, and as it becomes the children of light.

Natural religion would teach men to hope that God was placable, and would accept repentance; but it was a ſtrong additional aſſurance of it which the wiſ-

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dom of God vouchſafed to us by the Goſpel. With humility and reliance the penitent may draw near to the throne of grace, ſince Chriſt hath opened to us the heavenly temple by his death and reſurrection, and ever continues to intercede for us. That we may live worthy of theſe privileges, he hath given us in the Goſpel a perfect rule of Morality, and in his own life a bright example of every virtue; that we might not want motives to engage us to follow his ſteps, he hath made us a clear diſcovery of a judgement to come; that we might not want ſtrength to reſiſt temptations, he hath promiſed us a ſufficient aſſiſtance in time of need; and becauſe it was fit that a doctrine which was to be an univerſal law and rule of life, which was to be the condition of ſalvation to perſons of all capacities, ſhould be level to their underſtandings, therefore he hath delivered it to us with plainneſs and ſimplicity, teaching us to live religiouſly, in expectation of being judged according to our works. And He is to be our Judge, who himſelf put on mortality, and endured temptations, and can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

MORAL DUTIES TAUGHT, AND THE PRACTICE OF THEM ENCOURAGED BY THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

TO love God, to love our neighbour, to delight in doing good to others, to make a right uſe of our reaſon and underſtanding, and of all the powers committed to us, that we may fulfil the purpoſes for which we were created, theſe are the great duties and the chief commandments; theſe were diſcoverable by the light of reaſon; theſe are required of all intelligent creatures, of the higheſt Angel, and of every man upon earth; theſe were the principal precepts of the Law; theſe were more eſpecially inculcated by the Prophets; theſe are the moſt important parts of the Goſpel; and theſe ſhall be the religion of Saints in heaven, when other duties and acts of obedience ſhall ceaſe, as impracticable or unneceſſary.

The Chriſtian Revelation teacheth theſe moral virtues clearly, and affords the beſt helps and encouragements to the practice of them: for the Goſpel lays

lays before us the following doctrines, as conducing to our preſent and future welfare:

That Man is made to love God above all things, to love his neighbour as himſelf, and to love himſelf with a prudent and rational affection; and to remember that goodneſs is the only way to happineſs:

That man is a weak and imperfect creature, who in many things offends; but that God is merciful, and willing to accept repentance and careful endeavours to do well, inſtead of unſinning righteouſneſs and unerring diſcretion; and ready alſo to afford aid to all, who ſincerely deſire and humbly ſeek it. So that Men, whilſt they exert their own Natural powers in the performance of their duty, ſhould addreſs themſelves to God in prayer; acknowledging their offences, deſiring forgiveneſs, requeſting his aſſiſtance and returning thanks for his benefits:

That there ſhall be a reſurrection of the dead, and a day of judgement, when all ſhall receive according to their works; and rewards and puniſhments ſhall be diſpenſed with juſtice and with mercy:

That there is a perſon called the Word of God and the Son of God, who before time and the world dwelt with the Father; that God made all things by Him,

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and afterwards ſent Him into the world, to teach theſe doctrines to Men, and by his ſufferings and death to redeem thoſe, who ſhould repent and obey the Goſpel:

That the ſame Divine Perſon is appointed of God to diſpenſe rewards and puniſhments at the conſummation of all things:

That there is a Divine Spirit preſent in all times and places, who inſpired the Prophets, who aſſiſted the Apoſtles, who was the Author of the miracles by which the Chriſtian religion was confirmed, and who is ready to comfort, ſuccour and direct thoſe, who are willing to be guided by Him.

Theſe are the principal parts of Chriſtian faith and practice; and Chriſt required of all to whom the Goſpel ſhould be preached, firſt, that they ſhould obſerve the moral duties; ſecondly, that they ſhould believe thoſe doctrines and truths which are proper incitements and encouragements to virtue and piety; and thirdly, that they ſhould openly profeſs this faith, and own themſelves his diſciples, whatſoever ſhould be the conſequence.

As the Chriſtian Religion is a ſyſtem, which plainly and neceſſarily ſuppoſes and requires ſociety, as it is contained in the Scriptures, hence ariſe Two other

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conſequential Duties; firſt, that we ſhould, if we poſſibly can, join ourſelves to ſome Chriſtian Society; and ſecondly, that according to our abilities and opportunities we ſhould uſe the proper means and helps to underſtand the Scriptures, particularly the Goſpel, and the will of our Saviour declared in it.

Laſtly, upon an examination of the Books of the New Teſtament, and of Chriſtian antiquity, we find Two and only Two poſitive duties belonging to our Religion, Baptiſm and the Lord's Supper. Theſe may be called the ritual part of the Goſpel, the Ceremonial Law of Chriſtianity. By the firſt, we enter into the Chriſtian Covenant; by the ſecond, we declare our deſire and reſolution to continue in it. We cannot therefore account it grievous to comply with inſtitutions ſo eaſy, ſo plain, ſo ſignificant, and ſo well adapted to improve us in goodneſs.

VOL. 3.—SERM. 3.

A good Chriſtian acts his part in a great Theatre; he hath the Holy Angels and the Holy Spirit, and Chriſt the Judge, and God the Father of all, for his ſpectators; he hath thoſe to over-look him, who love

goodneſs above all things, and diſcern that which is ſolid and true from that which is falſe and counterfeit.

The end and deſign of the Goſpel to thoſe who embrace it is amendment and ſanctification; and the truths contained in the Goſpel are the beſt motives to the practice of Goodneſs. The harmony and connection between Chriſtian faith and Chriſtian morality, and the encouragements to obedience concur to make our duty ſo reaſonable and practicable, that Chriſtians only in name and not in reality are deprived of all excuſe. What ſtronger motive can be conceived to well-doing than immortal happineſs? and what would not a wiſe Man give or endure to ſecure it? If the hope of an uncertain gain encourages the Merchant to undertake long and dangerous voyages; if the deſire of riſing to high ſtations will teach the proud and ambitious to ſubmit to a thouſand meannefſes and inconveniences; if the flattering pleaſure of a criminal paſſion will induce the ſenſual to ſacrifice every thing that ought to be dear to him, how much more ſhould the proſpect of endleſs happineſs reconcile us to our reaſonable ſervice and duty!

AGAINST CONTRACTING EVIL HABITS.

THERE are perſons, who ſincerely profeſs the Chriſtian Religion; who fear God and deſire to be in his favour, but whoſe lives are not ſo conformable to their belief as they ought to be; who are ſorry for their faults, and fall into them again; who make not the progreſs in goodneſs which they acknowledge to be juſtly expected from them, and who have not that command over their paſſions which by a little more reſolution and ſelf-denial they might acquire. Such perſons ſhould ſeriouſly conſider the difficulty of reforming bad habits, and the extreme danger of that ſtate: for though it be not their preſent condition, yet if they uſe not timely caution, ſad effects may enſue; if they improve not, they will degenerate; if they indulge themſelves in ſmaller offences, they will be inſenſibly led on to a ſettled careleſſneſs and diſobedience. Such as they now are, were alſo thoſe

who are the moſt devoted ſlaves to their vices; for no one is very wicked on a ſudden. They, whoſe amendment is repreſented as almoſt impoſſible, were once divided between good and evil, and purſued neither ſteadily; and when they did amiſs condemned themſelves for it, and approved thoſe things which they had not the heart to practiſe, and entertained a ſhame and felt a remorſe for their offences, and propoſed to amend their lives. Thus it was with them at the firſt, till by degrees the deceitfulneſs of ſin infatuated them and left in them no diſpoſition to righteouſneſs. Theſe ſad examples ſhould be a warning to thoſe whoſe obedience is ſo incomplete and ſullied with ſo many defects; whoſe love of virtue is not equal and uniform; and whoſe affections are placed ſometimes on God and Religion, and ſometimes on the follies and vanities of the world. The tyranny of evil habits, and the eaſy deſcent from an unſteady virtue to thoſe habits, ſhould incite them to correct in themſelves every thing that their conſcience condemns; to ſet about it inſtantly, to-day whilſt it is called to-day, whilſt they hope to have time and ſtrength to complete the undertaking, whilſt piety appears amiable to them, whilſt the paſſage to it is ſhort, and the impediments eaſily removed. Theſe conſiderations

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are more particularly to be recommended to young perſons, who are entering into a ſtate of trial, to whoſe choice Virtue and Vice preſent themſelves, and who have as yet no habits of uprightneſs or of guilt.

There are Chriſtians who abſtain from known and deliberate tranſgreſſions; who ſtrive to make a daily progreſs in goodneſs, and to perform an acceptable ſervice to God. The difficulty of reforming vicious habits is a proper ſubject to be ſet before theſe alſo.

Reflections upon this ſubject may warn them to be upon their guard, that after they have ſet out well and proceeded well, they fail not at laſt, nor loſe a reward near at hand. The beſt perſons may find benefit from all kind of motives to religion, even from thoſe which ſeem only deſigned for the profligate. Whilſt they are here, they are liable to be ſeduced, and never quite out of the reach of danger till they have finiſhed their courſe: they have juſt cauſe to hope that they ſhall never forſake God, and they have reaſon to work out their ſalvation with pious fear, and to remember what is threatened, when the righteous man turneth away from his righteouſneſs. They who have wiſely and happily preſerved themſelves from evil habits ought to be very thankful to God, by whoſe bleſſing they are

free from that heavy bondage, and ſtrangers to the ſad train of evils which attend it. When they ſee the deplorable condition of thoſe who are accuſtomed to do evil, and whoſe amendment is ſo neceſſary, and yet ſo difficult, they will pity the caſe of ſuch perſons; but to this compaſſionate concern will naturally be added a great ſatisfaction, when they look in upon the ſtate of their own mind; and conſider what miſery they have avoided, and what advantages they have ſecured.

Laſtly, we may find this ſingular encouragement to well-doing, that by a perſeverance in our duty we may make righteouſneſs habitual to us, and not leſs pleaſant than profitable. God has not ſo dealt with us, that whilſt the paſſage from vice to virtue is difficult, the paſſage from virtue to vice ſhould be eaſy. There is, in this reſpect, not much difference in habits; and if it be not altogether, it is almoſt as hard to turn from righteouſneſs to ſin, as it is to turn from ſin to righteouſneſs.

TEMPERANCE TO BE OBSERVED. THE SOUL AND BODY TO BE EXERCISED IN USEFUL EMPLOYMENT.

THE Writers of the New Teſtament frequently and ſtrictly command us to obſerve the rules of temperance in our food, and in all lawful pleaſures and natural inclinations: by which it is not their deſign to deprive us of the conveniencies of life, but to make us beware leſt by the abuſe of things innocent and uſeful we ſhould render our Souls and Bodies unfit to perform their ſeveral functions; leſt we ſhould waſte our fortunes, and impoveriſh ourſelves and our dependents; and leſt we ſhould corrupt others by bad example. Therefore the Goſpel forbids drunkenneſs, debauchery, extravagance, and intemperance, and all ſuch irregularities; and recommends chaſtity and ſobriety: and theſe precepts it enjoins altogether for our own ſakes, for the good of each individual, and of families, and of human Society.

Men are ſo made, and ſuch is their condition, that they, who indulge themſelves in lazineſs, will want many things neceſſary both for Soul and Body. Whatſoever ſtate of life we be in, we cannot live reputably without labour. Therefore wiſe Men in all times have agreed in condemning idleneſs as pernicious to human nature, and a ſcandalous abuſe of thoſe powers and abilities, which God hath conferred upon us. And there is the more reaſon to deteſt it, becauſe ſluggiſh people are not only deſtitute of the conveniencies of life, and of a mind capable of enjoying them, but are remarkably prone to every thing that is bad, as experience teſtifies. When poverty and lazineſs take poſſeſſion of a man, lying and cheating and ſtealing are the uſual conſequences, together with every kind of ſhameleſs and ſordid meanneſs, diſingenuity, and diſhoneſty. Beſides; the human Mind is uaturally reſtleſs, and occupied continually upon ſome object and deſign. It is the unavoidable conſequence of being awake. Unleſs therefore the Mind be improved by honeſt meditations, and imployed in uſeful labours, it gives itſelf up to expenſive amuſements, to looſe imaginations, to unlawful actions, to keeping bad company and bad hours, or to ſtrolling from one aſſembly

aſſembly to another, or to drinking or gaming, which are very *improperly* called diverſions and recreations, and only ſerve to add to the miſeries and calamities of life, inſtead of alleviating or removing them. We have received from God a Soul and a Body, and we are obliged to take due care of both. The Soul is to be exerciſed in acquiring uſeful knowledge, without which we ſhall be blinded by ignorance, and ſwayed by vice, and fall into many faults, which might eaſily have been avoided. The Body is to be occupied in ſuch exerciſes as may ſtrengthen it, and make it capable of performing what the underſtanding recommends as proper to be done; and thus we become able to accompliſh what our own nature requires, what our friends and families and Society may juſtly hope and expect from us. Theſe are the dictates of Reaſon, and theſe dictates are enforced and recommended to us by the Sacred Writers.

VOL. 4.—SERM. 17.

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THE VALUE OF MENTAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND EXTERNAL POSSESSIONS DEPENDS ON THE APPLICATION OF THEM TO PROPER USES.

IN general, all the qualities of Mind and Body, and all the external advantages which are commonly called gifts of fortune, all theſe are ſo far valuable as they are uſeful to ourſelves and others, and no farther; ſo that being miſapplied they become contemptible or pernicious.

A man hath a good underſtanding; his conceptions are juſt, and well expreſſed; he hath penetration and ſagacity. Theſe accompliſhments, what uſe doth he make of them? If he employs them only to amuſe and divert himſelf and his companions, or to expoſe and ridicule thoſe whom he diſlikes, and to flatter thoſe from whom he hath expectations; if they be exerciſed on trifling or indecent objects, if his wit only ſerves to gratify his own irregular paſſions and thoſe of other people, his abilities are of no value in the ſight of God, or of wiſe men.

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He hath extenſive learning and knowledge. To what purpoſe doth he apply them? Is it to make himſelf and others better and wiſer, and to do ſervice to his country and to religion? Then they are really valuable: but if they ſerve only to unprofitable inquiries, or to make him vain, preſumptuous, dogmatical, and haſty in determining, or to lead him into bold and looſe notions tending to the detriment of virtue and piety, he is entitled to nothing better than contempt and abhorrence.

A man hath riches. Whence came they, and whither go they? for this is the way to form a judgement of the eſteem which they and their poſſeſſor deſerve. If they have been acquired by fraud or violence, if they make him proud and vain, if they miniſter to luxury and intemperance, if they are avariciouſly hoarded up, and applied to no proper uſe, the poſſeſſor becomes odious and contemptible.

Industry in Business.

INDUSTRY in our worldy callings is neceſſary, becauſe it is impoſſible to neglect it and to be obedient ſervants of God, as it may appear ſeveral ways.

Naked came we into this world, and deſtitute of all things which ſupport and preſerve life; naked alſo as to our Minds, which at firſt are a mere blank, and have no knowledge. But the Soul and the Body are made and deſigned by their Creator, the one to improve in underſtanding, the other to increaſe in ſtrength, and to be employed by the Soul in a manner which may conduce to the welfare of both. Thus God by the voice of nature teacheth us that he deſigned us to be improveable and induſtrious Beings. Again; God who hath made us incapable of ſubſiſting by ourſelves, and obliged to our fellow-creatures in part, for the things which we poſſeſs, teaches us by the voice of reaſon that we alſo in return ought to promote the welfare of others. Before we come to years of diſcretion, we have contracted a debt

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of gratitude to thoſe who have educated us, and to the nation to which we belong. We cannot refuſe to diſcharge it without great injuſtice, nor can we diſcharge it without induſtry in our callings.

The Goſpel ſtrictly commands us to do good, to aſſiſt, to inſtruct, to direct, and to relieve. It commands us therefore what the idle perſon hath neither power nor inclination to perform. Lazineſs is always attended with ignorance, and uſually produces poverty; and it is not to be expected that he who is ſo negligent of his own body and mind, ſhould be ſerviceable to others, and ſhould love his neighbour more than himſelf.

Add to this, that in general whoſoever is ſlothful in buſineſs, in his worldly concerns, will probably be a ſlothful Chriſtian too; for the ſame temper which diſpoſes to the one, diſpoſes to the other; and the ſame difficulties which deter a man from labouring to live creditably, will diſcourage him from ſtriving to live religiouſly. It is the nature of idleneſs to hate to take pains, and of goodneſs to be active; and therefore there is little reaſon to hope that they ſhould meet and dwell together.

Idleneſs is the parent of vice. He who hath ſome end, ſome innocent and honeſt end to purſue, and is conſtantly

conſtantly buſy in contriving and executing what tends to it, and hath accuſtomed himſelf not only to labour but to delight in his calling, keeps beyond the reach of many temptations; or if they find him out, will often ſend them away, becauſe he is not at leiſure: but numberleſs are the temptations to which the ſluggard is expoſed, and by which he is continually aſſaulted. His underſtanding is furniſhed with nothing good and uſeful; it purſues nothing ſteadily; it hath contracted an averſion from ſerious ſtudy and meditation: his imagination will therefore be reſtleſs and rove in queſt of one folly or other for entertainment: for the ſoul is buſy whether we will or no; it cannot ceaſe from thought, deſign, and action of one ſort or other, either uſeful or frivolous, either good or bad; and when it is not directed to that which is profitable, and tied down to ſome particular work, will grow wicked for want of employment.

An idle perſon uſually loaths his own company, for which indeed he is not much to be blamed. He cannot endure to converſe with himſelf or with his betters. This drives him to contract unprofitable friendſhips, or rather acquaintances; for ſeldom is there friendſhip where there is no virtue. He ſeeks out thoſe who are

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like himſelf, and whoſe time is a burden to them: he becomes a companion of mean and debauched perſons; their bad qualities he ſoon imitates, and makes no ſmall progreſs in vice, which is the only thing that he is diſpoſed to learn.

In all prudent labour of the hands or the head ſome acquiſition is made; we maintain ourſelves, and are not burdenſome to others; we get ſkill, dexterity, and experience, and ſo learn to do our work with leſs toil and trouble; we improve our underſtanding, and find out truths which more than reward the pains of ſeeking them.

By induſtry we obtain credit and reputation. Every one is willing to employ a diligent perſon, and whatſoever his condition be, he cannot be contemptible.

By induſtry we ſhut out many implacable enemies to our repoſe, many fretting deſires, and ſorrowful reflections, and turbulent paſſions, and violent temptations.

By induſtry we become beneficial to others, able to aſſiſt our friends, to relieve the poor, to inſtruct the ignorant, and to provide more eſpecially for thoſe whom God hath committed to our care.

Thus

Thus it appears that Induſtry in our worldly affairs is a duty which God requires from us; that there is a cloſer connection between it and Religion than we uſually imagine; that it is impoſſible to live an idle life, and a good life; and that he is really ſerving God, who is buſy in his calling.

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INDUSTRY IN RELIGION.

LET us now paſs on to diligence in religious affairs, in working out our ſalvation, to which we have the moſt preſſing motives.

The ſhortneſs and uncertainty of life warns us not to neglect it; for ſince upon our preſent behaviour depends our future ſtate; ſince the days of Man are few, few according to the courſe of nature, and often made fewer by a thouſand unforeſeen accidents, it behoves us to loſe no time, but to ſet about our duty inſtantly, to-day whilſt it is called to-day.

The reward ſet before us excites us to it. We think it reaſonable to labour for conveniencies which are temporal, that is, uncertain and tranſitory; and this induſtry is commendable. Much more ſhould we exert our utmoſt care and diligence in ſecuring to ourſelves the unchangeable favour of God, the ſociety of Saints and Angels, and an endleſs happineſs which ſhall be mixed with no ſorrows and diſappointments.

Gratitude moves us to it; to ſerve him with all our power who hath done ſo much for us, with whoſe benefits we are encloſed and ſurrounded, which way ever we caſt our eyes and our thoughts.

The puniſhment allotted to the idle and wicked ſervant calls us to it, to think no labour too great by which we may avoid the wrath to come. Infamy and Reproach, and Want and Dependence appear in terrible forms to us, and to eſcape them we are willing, if we have any ſpirit, to labour inceſſantly, and to ſubmit to the hardeſt toils. Fools and blind, if we perceive not that theſe are nothing compared to the woe, which muſt be the future portion of thoſe who will not ſerve God here in this ſtate of probation.

Our preſent intereſt invites us to it, to be moſt induſtrious in purſuing the welfare of our ſoul, which will procure us peace of mind, and the bleſſing of God even upon our worldly undertakings; whilſt a neglect of our duty to him will be attended with fear and remorſe, and give us an uneaſineſs which outward circumſtances, however flouriſhing, will not be able to compoſe.

Such motives we have to religious induſtry. Every Chriſtian will certainly allow them to have ſufficient

weight and force, and acknowledge that eternal life is deſireable, and that it is an indiſpenſable duty to ſerve God. But the illuſion is this: We are inclined to think this duty ſo eaſy to be performed, that a very little diligence and caution will be ſufficient.

Let us then conſider what kind of expreſſions the Sacred Writers uſe, when they ſpeak of our Chriſtian duty. They exhort us to be rich and fruitful in every good work; to be ready to every good work; to be zealous of good works; to abound always in the work of the Lord; to purſue and work good towards all men; to exerciſe ourſelves in Godlineſs, and in the labour of charity; to work out our ſalvation with fear and trembling; to give diligence to make our calling and election ſure; to continue patiently in well doing; to run that we may obtain a prize, and to preſs towards the mark; to watch continually and be upon our guard; to give all diligence to add one virtue to another; to walk circumſpectly; to watch inceſſantly to prayer; to gird up the loins of our mind; to ſtrive that we may enter in at the ſtrait gate; to wreſtle againſt principalities and powers; to take the kingdom of heaven by violence; to fight that we may receive a crown; and to war a good warfare, and to endure hardſhips, as faithful ſoldiers of Jeſus Chriſt.

Thus the ſcriptures tell us plainly, that without ſome labour we cannot be good. The difficulties with which the firſt Chriſtians ſtruggled were many and great; and difficulties of one kind or other will ever be ariſing. We are aſſaulted by importunate temptations; we often feel a propenſity to go aſide from our duty, and we are ſurrounded with bad examples, and multitudes who purſue their own deſtruction. When we reflect upon theſe things, we may perhaps be led into the other extreme, and ſuſpect that the ways of righteouſneſs muſt needs be diſagreeable, and that the paſſage through them is tedious and painful.

But the Scriptures ſay that the ways of religion are ways of pleaſantneſs; and the word of God is true, and conſiſtent with itſelf. That obedience is a labour, and that it is a pleaſure, are equally certain. That theſe things are reconcileable will appear, if we conſider that in all honourable and profitable employments, in all arts, in all ſtudies, the beginnings are difficult, and the difficulties muſt be maſtered by obſtinate application. But many things contribute to leſſen thoſe difficulties daily, or to make men leſs ſenſible of them, as a ſprightly reſolution, preſent profit, the hope of ſtill greater advantages, experience

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and practice, and long cuſtom which is a ſecond nature. Thus ſome, whom idle by-ſtanders judge to lead a wretched and laborious life, are really moſt contented and pleaſed with their condition; for a man is juſt as miſerable as he thinks himſelf, and if he delights in induſtry, induſtry to him is a diverſion, and idleneſs is a toil.

So alſo is it in our religious concerns. The duty of a Chriſtian is a laborious thing, eſpecially to thoſe who have bad diſpoſitions to conquer, or encounter; but when we do any thing good with labour, the labour paſſeth away, and the good remains: when we do any thing evil with pleaſure, the pleaſure paſſeth away, and the evil remains; and then cuſtom making our obedience habitual, an even temper, peace of mind, and many other preſent advantages ſpringing from it, the hope not only of eſcaping future evil, but of obtaining everlaſting life, and the divine aſſiſtance vouchſafed to us as far as it is needful, will by degrees make our inclinations join with our reaſon, and our duty become our delight.

The Duty and Advantages of Early Piety.

THOUGH we ſhould begin to ſerve God even from our youth, our earlieſt ſervice comes long after his favours. They extend back beyond our memory, and they were continued to us through our weak and helpleſs infancy. Thus before ever we come to years of diſcretion, we have contracted a vaſt debt of gratitude to our Creator and Preſerver, a debt which might make us very uneaſy, becauſe we can never diſcharge it, if there were not a pleaſure in endeavouring to pay it, and if ſuch endeavours were not all that God requires at our hands.

Great reaſon have we therefore to ſerve our Creator, as ſoon as we are capable of knowing our obligations, to meditate upon his favours, and to return him thanks for them; ſo that neither length of time may wear them, nor worldly affairs drive them out of our minds. This will effectually aſſiſt our endeavours to live

virtuously, for it is ſcarcely poſſible that we ſhould think often of our Benefactor, and return him evil for good.

Nothing, they ſay, is ſooner forgotten than a kindneſs. But is this a natural infirmity? If we think ſo, we deceive ourſelves. The fault is not in the weakneſs of our recollection, which ſeems ſtrong enough in moſt perſons, if it be conſidered how firmly and faithfully they can remember all the injuries which have ever been done to them. Let us not then employ our memory ſo perverſely as to make it only a ſtorehouſe for trifles, and an exact regiſter of every thing which ought to be blotted out, and allow no place in it for that which we can never ſufficiently eſteem, and which ought to be always preſent to us. Let us not diſregard Him, in whom we live and move and have our being, of whom we are or ought to be put in mind by every thing within us, and by every thing without us. Let us not think of our duty to him now and then, and be too buſy, or too idle, to do it conſtantly. He doth not ſo deal with us; he doth not protect us one day, and neglect us another: our returns ought therefore to be, in this reſpect, like his goodneſs, uniform and uninterrupted.

Again; We ſhould ſerve God in our youth, becauſe that is the way to make the practice of our duty eaſy to us, and becauſe, if we ſet out wrong, it is very hard afterwards to amend.

Difficulties there are in a regular obedience; but they will in a great meaſure be leſſened and removed by accuſtoming ourſelves to it betimes, whilſt the mind hath contracted no bad habits, and before ſin, by long indulgence, is grown familiar and bold; for vices as well as men have their infancy and childhood, and then they are more eaſily ruled and reſtrained. But when our early days have been ill employed, when it is not only neceſſary to learn to do well, but alſo to ceaſe to do evil, the taſk is difficult indeed; ſo difficult, that few in thoſe circumſtances care even to ſet about it, and to make the leaſt attempt towards a reformation. They turn their thoughts to things leſs irkſome, and ſtudy, not how to deliver themſelves from their bad ſtate, but how to conceal it from their own obſervation. At firſt, when they found a diſpoſition to depart from their duty, they had no intention, as they imagined, to get a cuſtom of offending, and to become perfect ſlaves to vice, but only to take a few ſmall licenſes, and then to ſtop, and return to a regular obedience. So thought

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and ſo ſaid many to themſelves, who went aſide from the right way, and never recovered it again, but were led on inſenſibly from one fault to another, from bad to worſe, and at laſt loſt all inclination, and almoſt all power to amend; who if they had been told at the beginning what a fatal progreſs they would make in iniquity, would never have believed it poſſible, and would have turned away with diſdain and abhorrence from an image ſo deteſtable.

It is true that perſons have repented, though late, and delivered themſelves from the bondage of ſin. There are examples of it, that none may deſpair; and thoſe examples are few, that none may preſume.

To ſuppoſe the beſt that can happen in ſuch a caſe; we may miſ-ſpend and abuſe our youth, and we may at laſt repent and amend. We ſhall repent; that is in other words, We ſhall undergo the ſharp pain of grief and remorſe, and the anxious fears of departing hence before we have made our peace with God; we ſhall wiſh that we had better employed our time, and never think of it without ſhame and confuſion: our firſt days will have been fooliſhly thrown away; the reſt will be ſpent in lamenting them. Youth is in ſeveral reſpects the moſt agreeable part of life, or at

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leaſt it ſeems ſo when it is paſt. There is an Eaſtern Proverb which ſays; The remembrance of youth is a ſigh. It may be more truly ſaid, The remembrance of ſin is a ſigh. Every one finds it ſo, unleſs he hath ſinned himſelf out of his ſenſes.

And then, to contend with bad habits is very hard and diſcouraging. To reſiſt them is to ſtrive againſt a ſwift ſtream bearing down upon us; to part from them is to cut off our own limbs. All this trouble we may prevent by an early, a gentle, and a gradual improvement, which will require no violent ſtruggles, no painful endeavours; which will be accompanied with no ſtings of a conſcience deeply wounded, no diſtracting apprehenſions of the divine diſpleaſure ſometimes bordering upon deſpair.

We ſhould ſerve God in our youth, becauſe as virtue will have the firſt poſſeſſion of us, we ſhall not be able to change for the worſe without an uncommon reſolution to do ill. The firſt love is uſually the ſtrongeſt and the moſt laſting. Our hearts being properly diſpoſed will not eaſily loſe the good impreſſion, and on any inclination to forſake the right way, Conſcience will take the alarm, and will give us timely warning by ſevere reproaches, which are moſt felt by

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those who have least offended, when they are about to commit any fault. This is an advantage which is lost by setting out wrong; for as good dispositions wear off, the inward reproofs grow weaker and less frequent, till at last, perhaps, sin takes sure possession of the man, and accompanies him through old age, and to the grave; nor will it leave him there; for like the Soul in which it dwells, it hath a kind of immortality. When we die, our good works, or our bad works, die not, but follow us and pursue us wherever we go.

Youth is also the time, when on several accounts we are better able to serve God than we are in a more advanced age, if we have neglected our duty before. There are good qualities and favourable dispositions which often accompany it. Thus, in youth properly educated, there is a sincerity not yet lost by the practice of deceit and dissimulation; there is a modesty, which is both a guard to virtue, and a check to sinful actions; there is a respect for Parents and Masters, the natural result of a state of dependence; there is a flexibility and aptness to receive instruction, which lessens as we grow up, if self-love, pride, and conceit, increase faster than understanding and judgement, and make us hasty,

haſty, obſtinate, and perverſe; there is laſtly a lively heat of temper, an activity both of body and mind, which as it is dangerous when it is employed in the ſervice of vice, ſo it can make a ſpeedy progreſs in virtue.

Another reaſon for which youth ſhould be well ſpent, is the uncertainty of life. It is not only the moſt proper and the moſt acceptable time to enter into the ſervice of God, but perhaps the only time allotted to us. We ſhould reckon it as ſuch, knowing that we cannot promiſe to ourſelves length of days; and that if we be cut off in the noon or in the morning, it is no more than what we might reaſonably have ſuppoſed. Such examples of mortality perpetually preſent themſelves to us, and ſilently reproach us for depending upon days which are not our own.

Laſtly, We ſhould ſerve God in our earlier days, with a view to the enſuing days which we may expect in the courſe of our life. "Remember now thy Crea-"tor, in the days of thy youth," ſays Solomon, "while "the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, "when thou ſhalt ſay, I have no pleaſure in them." They will certainly come, ſooner or later, unleſs ſudden death prevents them; and therefore, if we be wiſe,

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we ſhall in our youth, before they overtake us, prepare to meet them, and provide ourſelves all the aſſiſtances which we can procure to leſſen thoſe evils, and to ſupport and comfort us under them. It is prudence to lay up for ourſelves ſupports and aſſiſtances which may make them tolerable, and which will continue with us when all other things forſake us. And what can they be, unleſs the favour of God, and the ſenſe of a life ſpent in laudable induſtry, in acquiring uſeful knowledge, in diſcharging our duty to our Creator, in doing kind offices to our neighbour, in amending our faults, and improving in virtue? Theſe are a treaſure of which force and fraud cannot deprive us, which lies out of the reach of all enemies, and all accidents. The calamities which fall upon us will then loſe much of their weight; old age will be unto us only a nearer approach to everlaſting youth, and we ſhall meet death, if not with cheerfulneſs, at leaſt with decency and reſignation. It is indeed natural to us to diſlike diſſolution: but after all, the ſting of death is Sin, and therefore it is that many ſtart at it, who are even weary of life, and would willingly lie down and ſleep a perpetual ſleep.

To these convincing reasons for an early piety, I shall only add this; that it is in no respect hard and burdensome. Youth is chearful; and so is Religion. By living virtuously, they are deprived of nothing that is desirable, and only shun those things which are usually attended with bad consequences even for the present; by living virtuously they will probably live the longer, since most vices are no less enemies to the body than to the Soul. Whatsoever affords innocent diversion is not forbidden them; whatsoever tends to qualify them for their several stations in the world not only is not prohibited, but is absolutely required. Nature, necessity, reason, revelation, interest, honour, call them to industry; and industry is ever sprightly and entertaining, brings a quick and varied succession of objects to the senses, and of ideas to the mind, and so more effectually excludes dejection, moping, and melancholy than any frivolous or expensive recreation.

Such are the motives which we have to enter betimes and without delay into the service of God; motives suited to the lowest capacity, and yet not beneath the consideration of the most exalted genius. Whosoever despiseth them, and neglects the duty to which they excite, is a fool, whatsoever his abilites are; a fool

according to the language of the Scriptures, which give that name to all who are irreligious; and they themſelves will own that they deſerve it, when they are about to go hence. Is it not, for example, fooliſh to wiſh for impoſſibilities? And yet the wiſh that they had their days to ſpend over again will in all probability be frequently in their minds; they will recollect what they would be glad to forget; and their ſins will riſe to haunt them. A man's memory and conſcience is not like his common place book, where he may blot out what he pleaſes.

The importance and advantage of ſerving God in our youth ſhew us the ineſtimable value of a good education.

They who have been bleſſed with a liberal, a ſober, and a virtuous education, who have been induced and encouraged to the practice of all that is uſeful and commendable by diligent inſtruction and domeſtic example, muſt not forget that they are of the number of thoſe to whom much hath been given, and of whom, as our Saviour ſays, much ſhall be required. If they become diſobedient ſervants to God, wicked or even uſeleſs members of ſociety, they are altogether without excuſe. They ought to ſhew their thankful-

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neſs to the Almighty, by induſtriouſly improving the talents committed to them; and next to God, they ought to honour and to love thoſe, who by taking care to adorn their minds, and to direct their thoughts to proper objects, and to ſhew them the way to peace and happineſs, have laid upon them an obligation which ought always to be gratefully acknowledged, and can never be fully repaid. To ſuch Parents and Friends the warmeſt affection is due whilſt we poſſeſs them, and a dear remembrance when they are taken from us.

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THE PLEASURES ENJOYED BY A RELIGIOUS PERSON.

THERE is a pleaſure in thoſe occupations in which a virtuous and religious Man will be frequently employed.

Almoſt all perſons, they eſpecially who have had a good education, ſpend ſome part of their time in acquiring knowledge of one ſort or other, in reading and in reflecting. Now where the treaſure is, there is the heart alſo; and ſuch as the temper is, ſuch is the favourite ſtudy; and conſequently good perſons will often meditate upon truths worthy to dwell in an upright mind. The perfections of the Almighty; the knowledge of human nature; the duties of Man, as diſcoverable by reaſon; the works of God, in which his power, ſkill, and goodneſs ſhine forth; the holy Scriptures which teach wiſdom unto ſalvation; and any ſtudy which makes us uſeful in our generation, improves the underſtanding, and corrupts not the

heart, will employ our time, if we act like rational creatures, as far as the neceſſary affairs of life permit, and our natural and acquired abilities enable us. In theſe occupations there is much pleaſure; they engage the mind in prudent and honourable deſigns; they deliver it from mean cares and trifling views; they preſerve it from indolence and ſloth; they compoſe the paſſions; they ſtrengthen the judgement, they have the approbation of conſcience, and they alſo divert the imagination. Objects which are great and noble communicate ſome degree of their own ſplendor and dignity to the Soul which contemplates upon them; teach it to entertain a due value for itſelf, and to deſpiſe things tranſitory; and at the ſame time overflow it with a ſilent and ſerious joy. We are pleaſed with the ſight of any thing that is grand and ſplendid in the viſible world; we are more pleaſed when our thoughts are ſwallowed up in eternity and immenſity, in the incomprehenſible perfections of the Author of all, the Firſt and the Laſt, who was, and is, and is to come.

There is a pleaſure in that behaviour towards others and that manner of proſecuting our wordly affairs, which ever accompany a religious diſpoſition.

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He who loves and fears God will not have inclination or leiſure to purſue the things of this life with immoderate earneſtneſs, nor will he ſet an immoderate value upon them; much leſs will he acquire them by infamous methods, though it were to gain the whole world; nor will he on the other hand fall into want by lazineſs or extravagance, but will honeſtly labour to ſupport himſelf and thoſe committed to his care, and to do good, and to be uſeful in his ſtation. In ſuch a way of life much uneaſineſs is avoided, and much ſatisfaction muſt ariſe. Either pleaſure is to be found in calm integrity, and honeſt induſtry, and acts of beneficence, and moderate deſires, or there is no ſuch thing as pleaſure in this world.

VOL. 2.—SERM. 7.

OCCASIONAL PRAYERS.

Before the Church Service begins.

Aſſiſt me, O God, with the grace of thy Holy Spirit to help my infirmities at this time, and to fill my heart with devotion; that my Prayers and Praiſes may be acceptable in Thy ſight; through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. *Amen.*

When the Church Service is ended.

Forgive, O God, whatever Thou haſt ſeen imperfect in my worſhip of Thee; the wanderings, the coldneſs, the inattention of my thoughts: and grant that from this and every act of Religious Service I may form more pious reſolutions and lead a more virtuous life; through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. *Amen.*

On coming to the Altar at the Time of Communion.

In the confeſſion of my Sins, the offering of praiſes, and commemoration of Chriſt's death and paſſion, at this Thy Holy Altar O God! give me Grace to be ſincerely contrite, impreſs my Soul with an abhorrence of wickedneſs,

neſs, excite in me the moſt lively ſenſe of Thy Goodneſs, diſpoſe me to forgiveneſs of others as I implore pardon for my own tranſgreſſions, and make me devoutly thankful for the Redemption of Mankind, by Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. *Amen.*

At the Offertory.

O God! the giver of all temporal bleſſings, incline my heart to relieve the wants of others as Thou art gracious unto me!

Before receiving the Bread.

Glory and thanks be to Thee, O God, who didſt look with mercy and compaſſion upon fallen Man, and didſt ſend thy Son Jeſus Chriſt to redeem us from the puniſhment and guilt of Sin. And to Thee, O Chriſt Thou Eternal Son of the Moſt High, do I yield moſt humble and hearty thanks for the Redemption of the World by Thy death and paſſion, in remembrance of which I come to this Thy Sacrament.

After receiving the Bread.

O Lord Chriſt! who didſt die a ſacrifice for the ſins of Man, vouchſafe I beſeech Thee to ſanctify me, and

make worthy to partake of that Salvation, which thy precious death hath obtained for all thoſe, who truly endeavour to obey the precepts of thy divine Goſpel!

After receiving the Cup.

Grant, O Lord Chriſt, that as often as I commemorate thy death, I may be renewed in all pious and virtuous diſpoſitions, and may then and ever ſerve Thee; to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit be all honour and glory, world without end. *Amen.*

When the Communion is ended.

Give me grace, O God, ſeriouſly to conſider the ſolemn confeſſion I have this day made, and the deep contrition I have profeſſed in the aweful preſence of Thee, who knoweſt the ſecrets of all hearts! May the remembrance of this my bounden duty in commemorating the death of my bleſſed Redeemer fortify me againſt temptations to ſin; that having ceaſed to do evil and learnt to do good I may diſcharge all Chriſtian Duties to myſelf, to my fellow-creatures, and to Thee; and finally ſecure the Salvation of my Soul in a life of Immortality, Purity, and Sanctity! Grant this, O God, through the merits of my Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt! *Amen.*

A Prayer

A Prayer for the Morning.

O moſt Infinite and Almighty God! who by thy Eternal Son didſt firſt create, and by thy ſuſtaining Providence doſt continually uphold the Univerſe and all things therein; to Thee I render moſt unfeigned thanks, that I have been preſerved through the perils and dangers of the Night paſt, and am raiſed up from the bed of ſleep to the comforts of returning day. Forgive, O God! for Chriſt's ſake whatever offences I may have committed in the hours of retirement by thought, word, or deed: and as another day is now advancing in my life, enable me by the help of thy Holy Spirit to improve it in ſuch a manner, that I may grow in wiſdom, virtue, and piety, as I continue to grow in age. Let a due ſenſe of all thy Mercies, a dread of thy diſpleaſure againſt iniquity, and a ſerious concern for the ſalvation of my Soul, be deeply impreſſed on my thoughts: that ſo neither the influence of bad example, nor the prevalence of temptation to folly and ſin, may induce me to violate the dictates of my own conſcience, nor to diſobey the Goſpel of my Bleſſed Redeemer. Diſpoſe me to habits of induſtry and diligence in the acquiring of all uſeful learning: but

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more eſpecially vouchſafe to increaſe in me that knowledge of Chriſt's Religion and that Faith in HIM, to which Thou haſt called me. Bleſs me, my Relations, and Friends, with ſuch a portion of temporal good things, as Thou ſeeſt moſt expedient for us: and if it be Thy divine Will, preſerve us from the caſualties, to which without thy powerful Protection we are continually expoſed. Ar[illegible], O God! that when this day is ended, I may not be unmindful of Thy Fatherly Goodneſs; but inſpire my ſoul with ſuch recollection of Thy never-failing Mercies, that at the cloſe of this and every ſucceeding day I may laud and magnify Thy Holy Name, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, who hath taught and commanded us thus to pray:

Our Father, &c.

A Prayer for the Evening.

O God! by whoſe Almighty Power and Merciful Goodneſs the events of life are directed, to Thee I render moſt unfeigned thanks for the preſervation with which Thou haſt protected me through this day paſt. Thou knoweſt, O God! the ſecrets of our hearts and the frailties of our nature: but for Chriſt's ſake forgive whatever Thou haſt ſeen irrational, immoral, and irreligious

religious in my conduct. Inſpire my ſoul with an earneſt deſire to flee from ſin, and to follow righteouſneſs: impreſs on my thoughts this aweful truth, that there can be no peace for the wicked: cheriſh in my heart a ſpirit of Faith and Obedience towards Chriſt my Redeemer: and give me grace ſo duly to meditate on the end for which my life has been prolonged, that I may endeavour more and more continually to promote Thy Glory, the good of Mankind, and the Salvation of my own Soul. To Thy gracious Protection do I commend myſelf, my Relations, and Friends, through the perils and dangers of the approaching Night. Refreſh, I beſeech Thee, my body with neceſſary ſleep: but more eſpecially preſerve my Soul from all things that may tend to corrupt it. In the depth of darkneſs, during my wakeful hours cauſe me to remember, that in Power and Knowledge Thou muſt be every where preſent, and that to Thy ſight every Thought, Word, and Deed of Mankind muſt always be open. O let the conſciouſneſs of thy Omnipreſence dwell ſo deeply and conſtantly on my Mind, that no temptations may prevail on me to do evil: and fill me with ſuch a love of Thy Goodneſs and dread of Thy diſpleaſure, that at all times and in all places, whether in ſecret retirement or public intercourſe,

courſe, whether in the darkneſs of Night or the light of Day, I may ſo endeavour to keep the Holy Commandments of Thy Bleſſed Son, as finally after this life to partake of immortal happineſs, through the merits of my Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, who died for my ſins, who roſe for my juſtification, and who ever liveth to make interceſſion for me.

Our Father, &c.

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